1: Mbam--138 E-9 (1913-1914) 1916 FOSS Mvango FOSS

sides of this square and held in place by a binding of twisted raffia fibers. The sides are then plaited by the simplest method, that is, with the horizontal bend weaving in and out of the vertical fibers. As all of these mats always have approximately the same height and diameter, the ngulu coins are both similar in shape and quite constant in weight. The natives use them a great deal to trade goods. In some regions the ngulu coins has become a veritable currency, with a standard value from one tribe to another. [170] A market is organized regularly when caravans call at Ibubiri, and there the people of the interior exchange the products of their industries for the imported objects brought by the Blacks who work for the Whites. Ngulu coins are among the principal items of trade and bring a very high price. In the Ubwe region, the old chief Kue Kue was a great ngulu trader. He came by regularly with four or five of his wives, bringing various products from the region between the Kassi and the Lukenie to exchange for the ngulu made in the Lukwe region.

Throughout the central Congo region, the ngulu used for trade has the shape of an elongated truncated cone. Among the Bwongo-bwoo and farther east, on the other hand, ngulu most often is shaped in a ball. The native of these regions often uses it to decorate his pottery and wooden objects and to dye the fibers of cloth used for decoration. He keeps it in concentric boxes carved from tshula wood and usually decorated with very artistic designs. He also uses it to color his hair. [Ed., a passage from the middle of page 170 to the last paragraph, page 171, is omitted.]

[171] Aside from ngulu, the native sometimes smears his body with a type of white clay quite frequently found in the river beds. [172] The native calls it mpemba. Its use is far from being as widespread as that of ngulu, and we believe that the native associates it with magic power rather than ornamentation. Mpemba is used chiefly by the peoples of the Congo-Kassi, Lake Leopold II, and Lukenie regions, up to the region of the Batua.

We never saw a native smear his whole body with it. The few women in mourning that we saw were covered with a grayish-yellow mud and not with mpemba. We believe, moreover, that the use of mpemba is reserved to the chief, his wives, and perhaps

2. The nature of wala valuables

[111] The wala primarily consists of copper and brass rings. Wrought metal objects (bilobo), such as spears, knives, or axes are also added. Nowadays a part may be made up of simple brass or iron (steel) bars. Cloth may be given in addition. A dia-gbet is worth 5 to 6 rings (nowadays 10), and a ba-gbet, 3 to 4 bekonga (nowadays 6 to 7). One or more elifudi bells are usually joined as gifts.

[112] [113] Payment in iron or copper chains (bongo-nsala), in various kinds of bead necklaces, and in leopard's teeth has almost entirely disappeared. Formerly, certain kinds of beads had great value; the big, round bluish-white ones (lumufuga, pl. mufuga) were worth 1 konga each, the big, oblong blackish ones, cylindrical or rectangular in shape, 2 to 3 centimeters in diameter and 5 to 10 centimeters long (called nkingi) were worth one slave or, nowadays, 20 to 25 bekonga each.

[114] Copper (konga) and brass (bilobo) are the most important of all. Thus paying the bride price is often referred to as diya ki bilobo ki konga.

[115] The statement by R.P. Raponda (in Congo, 1922, Vol. I, pp. 402-403) that original valuables were the bekonga, the bingetele, and the mitako is based on an error. [116] The first two types of valuables, also called bendinga by some tribes, were used exclusively by the Mbondi of Lake Tumba and the adjacent Ekonda (Bonanga, Balingi, Lonyonyonga, etc.). The mitako, known in Lonkundo as mongo, singular longolo, are not native; this monetary unit was introduced by the Independent State.

[117] The practice of making the payment or loan partially in money or in objects of European origin (such as fabrics, blankets, sewing machines, trunks, household utensils, etc.) is gradually being introduced. Before the crisis it was already very popular among "white people."

3. The source of the valuables

A young man obtains the valuables for the bride price in various ways. The most usual way and the one which also conforms best to the Nkundó's familial and social regulations is the use of valuables

4. The amount of the wala

[595] Formerly the amount of the wala averaged 20 to 30 bakonga, or their equivalent. The value of any object included in the bride
● [596] price could be calculated in copper, so that the konga was, so to speak, the monetary unit of the Nkundó.

At the present time in the districts near Flandria, the minimum is from 55 to 60 rings. Among the Bafungó and the Ingóló the rings
[597] are noticeably bigger and their weight in copper or brass is greater; there the minimum can be 30 rings. Elsewhere the figure is a good deal higher.

The price of the wala generally exceeds the minimum, which is found rather rarely. The average is about 60 to 80 rings. The number of 200 is reached only in extremely rare cases and it is exceeded even less frequently (see cases given below).

Differences in the amount of the wala are due primarily to the relative wealth of the contracting parties, the husband's valuation of his wife, the greed of the latter's parents, and the size of the bride price demanded for the woman they want to obtain with their daughter's (sister's) bride price. The cases of women who have left their previous husbands also must not be forgotten, for the new bride price must serve to reimburse him.

The amount of the wala may also be increased to satisfy the
[598] vanity of the woman, who wants to appear superior to her companions, or of the husband, who wants to be recognized as very wealthy. (1)

> 1. The man who pays a great deal for his wife is given the honorific epithet esikobwo, "wells and mushrooms." All can find as much water as they want at wells, and there the mushrooms multiply. Thus many can benefit from the riches brought by the son-in-law.

[599] It is not unusual to hear of a woman boasting in the course of a dispute: "I am not a slave; my husband paid so-and-so much for me. [138] But you -- your husband doesn't love you, or else he is poor, for he paid only so much."

443 Division of labor is unknown, and each person works entirely on
[117] his own, without the help of a middleman. There are no laborers
and certainly no artisans unless there happens to be some artisan or
other who learned his trade under the government or at one or other
of the Mission posts and has returned to his village after having com-
pleted his contract.

As a rule, such people do not find sufficient work in their own
villages, and, as they are usually in possession of a few boxes, clothes,
and pots and pans which they have acquired with the savings of their
monthly salary, they play the grand gentleman in their village until
their goods and chattels have been used up and worn out.

"Nyolemwa Bonsia," he says, "I am tired of work." "Nkowa
l'empele," "I am dying of the heavy, difficult work."

Several of them then return to one or the other of the centers
of the White settlers and again offer themselves as craftsmen.

455 A good craftsman has a high reputation among the natives, and
his social position is even a very good one for a Negro. He is able
regularly to supply food for his wife and children and also to get
himself clothes.

32% Although most Negroes work individually, this is not true of the
smith who has to have helpers in order to do his job.

Since the Mongo Negro knows nothing of wages, his helpers get
965 part of the income, consisting of mitako [a kind of metal currency]
43% or some part of the work that has been done, either a knife or a lance,
or a foot or arm ring.

f

I. THE SMITH'S TRADE.

32% Of the various industrial trades, that of the smith is certainly the
555 first in rank. The smith is one of the leading people [96] in the vil-
lage and one of the inevitable persons to have a decisive voice in
village affairs whether in settling differences or in meetings.

In fact, the smith is the only one of the Mongo Negroes who
works regularly and does not rest on his oars. From what he earns he
is able to buy quite a number of wives, and he is regarded as one of
the village heads whose wishes must be consulted.

consists of a beautifully fashioned native knife, or a lance, or mitoko [copper wire used as currency]. In some areas, it was the polygynist who attended the mother at the birth of the daughter. He had the wood gathered, water brought, and food prepared. If, then, the expected child was a boy, the security was usually returned, and the contract declared null and void. If, however, the one who had given the security was a village chief or a man of importance, then the father of the child tried to give him another daughter. The father had, for instance, at an earlier time given a daughter to another man of much less importance. In the above-mentioned case, he would give back the bride price received, take his daughter back, and give her to the polygynist from whom he expected a larger bride price.

573 Sometimes too the boy was taken by the polygynist and remained in his family until the father could trade a daughter for him.

573 541 While very young and still a child, the little daughter was installed in the harem of the polygynist. She was brought up there, together with other children of her age and status; or rather, she grew up there in the midst of those heathen customs without any upbringing.

585 The composition of the harem of a polygamist:

The first wife was called the Bomatas; she preceded all the other wives in rank, and in the absence of the polygynist, she was the mistress of the harem.

The second wife was called Ekila; she was the most loved and preceded all the remaining wives. She was also called Nkonda.

The third wife was called Bolumbu. At the appointment of the Bolumbu, a certain ceremony took place, and the wife was clothed with an animal skin. The Nku, a sort of patriarch and [203] magician, sometimes had three or four Bolumbu who served as [121] messengers to other villages. In this capacity they had special privileges. For instance, to attack a Bolumbu was a reason for declaring war.

[533] The remaining women were simply women of the harem, without distinction.

585 In the area of Monjoku, among the Bolee [Bole], the first wife was called Nkisa, with the same rank as Bomatas. The second

587 had to acquire a wife with the bride price or with a supplement of
428 the bride price of his sisters. Three of his sisters, for instance, were
583 married, and he needed 3,000 mitako to pay for his intended wife. Now he went with presents to his three brothers-in-law and asked for 1,000 mitako from each of them. The bride price was already paid to the father; the 1,000 mitako that he asks are a supplement of the bride price.

With these 3,000 mitako, our young man pays for his wife. This wife now becomes the Nkita of the three sisters. If this young man dies, his three sisters and his three brothers-in-law all demand their share back from the widow. If she is sold, the price must be divided among the three brothers-in-law. If she remains in the family of her husband, with the uncle or brother, she continues to be the Nkita of her three sisters-in-law.

431 [542] There also exists a general rule and custom that the
583 family which has received the bride price regularly give gifts to their daughter and son-in-law or sister and brother-in-law. These gifts consisted of goats, dogs (which also have a rather large value among the natives), ducks, etc., but the gifts never consisted of money. These gifts were in turn given by the son-in-law or brother-in-law to the one who had helped him pay the bride price.

For instance, if the young man of whom we just spoke received gifts from the family of his wife, he would then have given these gifts to his three brothers-in-law. These gifts were often so much that the value of them was almost equal to the bride price that the man had paid for his wife. Custom demanded, in such a case, that the man then pay a supplement to the bride price.

In case the bride price had to be given back, the gifts that the family had already given might be subtracted from the bride price. When such disputes are brought before a European, it is difficult for him to settle them, for the value is tremendously exaggerated by the parties. The husband will demand the return of a much larger bride price than he actually gave, while the family on its side will estimate the gifts that they had given as much higher than the actual value or amount.

436 Something about prices, the bride price for wives, and native money value.

Their first original money was as follows.

436 1. Benkata: this was thin iron or copper wire rolled into small rings; the thickness of the wire was about 3 millimeters; the length, 20 to 25 centimeters.

2. Bingetele: iron or copper bars about 8 millimeters thick and 15 centimeters long; these are still in use in Bikoro.

436 301 3. Bekata: copper wire; thickness about 7 or 8 millimeters, and 1 meter or 1.50 meters long; spiral shaped; the women wore these rolled around their legs as copper leggings.

[543] 4. Bakonga: copper rings which served as arm bands and foot bands and also as collars. The size differed for small or large persons; the weight is from one half kilo to 5 kilos.

436 5. Mitako: copper wire about 4 millimeters thick and 25 centimeters long, usually bent like a hairpin. The mitako served as a uniform currency, from which the other values and prices were reckoned, like the franc with us. The value of the mitako was formerly reckoned at five centimes.

583 435 Formerly the bride price, which was paid for a wife in almost all of Equatorial Africa, was from 5 to 20 bakonga. (The value of the bakonga differed greatly according to the weight. The average value, however, is estimated at 2.50 francs.) This payment was further supplemented with slaves or wives. This manner of payment and the bride price still exist in the districts where the natives have not yet, or practically not, come in contact with Europeans. Also, [567] it was sometimes paid with only slaves or women. The price for one female slave was relatively much less than for another woman.

178 583 Through the occupation of the Congo by Europeans, the family life of the natives has necessarily undergone great changes, and their customs and habits as well.

In the first place the natives have found themselves deprived of their wives by the sentinels of the Independent Congo State. [661] These black sentinels, appointed in the villages by the State to supervise the reaping of caoutchouc, assumed an unlimited power. They took as many wives of the natives as they chose and did not pay for a single one.

Next many black soldiers, servant boys, and workmen of the Europeans also took wives everywhere in the beginning, without bothering about the native customs, that is, without paying for those wives; and this often happened under the protective power of their Whites.